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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/SPG AND IO/PSC

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TRANSITION, CPA IMPLEMENTATION

REF: A) KHARTOUM 661 B) KHARTOUM 660

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11. SUMMARY: UN Special Representative Jan Pronk urged Darfur rebels and the Government to focus on the Abuja talks, not Tripoli back-channels, during a March 15 press conference, though he warned that the AU,s recent ceasefire proposal was "not good enough." Pronk declared he was ready to receive a UN peacekeeping1 planning assessment team, although a decision would not be made until the Security Council meets on March 21. He also expressed his frustration with the Eastern Front -- which once again refused to meet with him -- and reviewed progress on CPA implementation. END SUMMARY.

Road to Peace Starts in Abuja, not Tripoli

12. UN Special Representative in Sudan Jan Pronk told reporters in Khartoum on March 15 that "the only place to negotiate peace in Darfur was Abuja," and urged all parties to take specific negotiating steps to reach a real ceasefire. Responding to a question about recent meetings in Tripoli between Vice President Ali Osman Taha, SLA Chairman Mini Minawi, and JEM Chief Khalil Ibrahim, Pronk stressed that "the AU is the only game in town," and parties "have to negotiate in Abuja."

13. However, Pronk warned that a partial agreement -- like the AU,s "Enhanced Humanitarian Ceasefire" proposal -- was "not good enough." "Even if it were to be accepted, it would just be like another N,Djamena Agreement," because it would allow only the delivery of humanitarian relief, not the return of the displaced to their villages, he continued. Moreover, a UN peacekeeping force would be "doomed to fail" without a comprehensive agreement respected by all parties.

UN Planning Assessment Team: Will They Come?

14. Pronk said he expected the Secretary General to send a peacekeeping planning assessment team "sometime in March," and emphasized that "we are ready to receive it" (Ref B). But he also noted that "consultation with the government was necessary," and did not expect to begin the process until after he presents his quarterly report to the Security Council on March 21. In response to press reports that the Government had already refused to accept an assessment team, Pronk urged forbearance until the Security Council meets next week. "Let's not talk too much, and we,ll leave it those who will make a decision."

Disappointed in Eastern Front

15. Pronk also noted that he had a three-hour discussion with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki during his March 13 visit to Asmara, but declined to provide details (Refs A, B). However, he declared he was "quite disappointed" with leaders of the Eastern Front, who failed to show up for their appointment -- the second time, Pronk noted in frustration, that the Eastern Front had stood him up. "They have to agree to talk; if not, they will have to find solutions on the ground."

CPA Implementation: CPC Meeting, Abyei Attack, IDPs

16. Pronk then turned to the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). He reported that the Ceasefire Political Commission (CPC) had held its first meeting in February, after eight months of delay, and would hold its second meeting at the end of March. The atmosphere during the first meeting had been "very good," and he was hopeful the CPC could begin dealing with a number of substantive issues. However, he was very concerned by the last week's attack on a convoy of unarmed SSDF returnees last week in Abyei, which he considered "a serious violation" of the CPA. When pressed to identify who he thought was responsible for the attack, Pronk declined to answer, though he admitted to having "some suspicions."

17. Finally, Pronk announced that the Khartoum wali had made a "firm commitment" to the UN and several senior diplomats on March 14 that no more IDPs would be deported from Khartoum against their will. "There will be no more forced relocations," Pronk said definitively. He also noted that he had asked a UN agency, UN-HABITAT, to begin working on urban poverty relief projects in the capital.

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18. Tripoli minimize considered.
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